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ABSTRACT

As public institutions, community colleges are dependent for their survival and continuity upon favorable evaluations by the external constituencies that finance the colleges. Underscoring the resource-dependent nature of community colleges are the revenue limitations brought about by declining enrollments, the effects of high costs, and taxpayer resistence to levies. Using a resource-dependent model, four steps were taken to assess the organizational effectiveness of the Maricopa Community College District (MCCD): (1) the Arizona State Board of Directors for Community Colleges and the MCCD designated two criteria for evaluating 60 community college activities, i.e., whether the activity is important to do and whether it should be funded with tax dollars; (2) a survey instrument incorporating these criteria was sent to 90 state legislators, 21 state board members, 2,330 randomly selected registered voters, and all 38 MCCD administrators; (3) data were weighted according to the relative political influence exercised by each group as perceived by the MCCD administrators; and (4) data analyses were conducted to determine the perceptions of each group and to contrast the views of the MCCD administrators and the external groups. The study found that the majority of the differences of opinion resulted from resistence by the external groups to the use of tax monies for activities supported by the administrators, especially in the areas of special treatment for particular special student groups. (HB)

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Excellence and Organizational Effectiveness in an Urban Community College District

by

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Presented to:

American Association of Community & Junior Colleges

National Convention

Washington, D.C.

April 3, 1984

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Presentation at AACJC National Convention
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Excellence and Organizational Effectiveness in an Urban Community College District

The assessment of excellence for community colleges is problematic if not elusive. The dictionary defines excellence as the possession of a valuable quality or virtue. As such, excellence is a value-laden term resulting from someone's judgement. It might be said of excellence what Eisenhower once said of success, "it is a journey not a destination." Thus the state of excellence is quite transitory and dependent on other's judgement. Measuring excellence as related to urban community colleges is difficult for two reasons. The institutions by virtue of their size are complex. Urban community colleges offer such a wide and comprehensive range of services that it is also difficult to agree on the basis or bases for defining excellence. Should it be size or depth of programs, number of graduates, preparation of the faculty, career services to students, community support, etc.

This paper proposes that excellence for urban community colleges be defined in terms of their organizational effectiveness. This is not to say that it should serve as the sole indicator to the exclusion of other measures as mentioned earlier but that in light of current conditions organizational effectiveness presents a certain degree of relevancy to our times. In view of this, this paper will cover four areas for discussion:

(a) definition of organizational effectiveness

(b) The reasons for its usefullness or relevancy to current conditions confronting urban community colleges.

(c) The application of a means to assess organizational effectiveness to obtain data and information useful to a particular urban community college district.

(d) major findings

Defining Organizational Effectiveness

The concept of organizational effectiveness has been adopted from a model described by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978). Essentially, community colleges as public institutions are resource dependent and are consequently controlled by external sources, state boards and legislatures, as well as other socio-political demands and constraints. Organizations dependent on external resources are not self directed and autonomous; instead, they are "other directed" in a struggle and state of tension between autonomy and external control. Public agencies lack a "profit motive so that the criteria of organizational effectiveness most commonly involves survival and continuity. Consequently, as public institutions, community colleges are dependent on favorable evaluations by the external environment (the strategic constituencies who finance the the college) as well as negotiations with that environment for desired resources.

Conditions

Three conditions serve to give relevancy to this view of organizational effectiveness by serving to stress the external dependency of community colleges. The first is that there is a significant

decline in full time enrollments for many areas of the country. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education reports that the Northeast and North Central states will be hardest hit with 40 to 32 percent declines respectively in the availability of graduating seniors. Even the most optimistic projection which is offered by the Carnegie Commission predicts a two percent decline from now through 1990. Since most community college have funding formulas which are enrollment based these declines result in direct loss of revenues.

The second condition involves the issue of high costs. While inflation has recently been brought under control its detrimental affects are still with us. In relation to a standard scale the proportion of costs for higher education in 1902 was 1.2 percent of the Gross National Product; however, in 1975 it grew to 7.7 percent. The value of the dollar today to meet the operating costs for community colleges is worth 30 to 40 cents of what it was in 1967.

Finally, community colleges have not been immune to the voter-taxpayer resistence to tax levies which have served as revenue sources or community colleges. The classic example is Proposition 13 in California which was a voter taxpayer initiative that in 1978 amended that state's constitution and placed a ceiling on current taxes and controls on new ones. Arizona adopted in 1980 a similar although less drastic measure. In the 70's other states such as Texas, Michigan, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey authorized separate governing boards for community colleges but did not grant them separate taxing authority.

In summary, the revenue limitation brought about by declining enrollments, the effects of high costs and voter-taxpayer resistence to levies serve to underscore the resource dependence nature of public community colleges.

Assessing Organizational Effectiveness

It is useful to keep in mind a basic difference between effectiveness and efficiency. Effectiveness is the first of two questions: Is the community college doing what it is supose to be doing? Efficiency refers to how well such efforts are being done. While both are important, it is essential to first obtain an idea about concensus on what is to be done before examining how well it should be done. In view of this priority, efforts presented here deal only with effectiveness.

Under the resource dependence model four steps were used to assess organizational effectiveness. (Page 2 of handouts)

Step 1: Criteria for Evaluation

In this step, the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges in Arizona who are appointed by the governor to include two representatives from each county and the Maricopa Community College District designated two criteria by which to evaluate 60 community college activities. These criteria asked the respondent if a particular activity was important to do and should it be funded with tax dollars.

Step 2: Evaluation of Activities

For this step, the criteria were actually applied through use of

survey instrument sent to 90 state legislators, the 21 state board members and four staff and to 2330 randomly selected registered voters. All 38 administrators (whose titles were associate dean or higher) were also asked to complete the survey as a means to determine how congruent the priorities of the administration were with those of the strategic constituencies. Over 90 percent return was received from the state board, 59 percent from legislators and 33 percent from the registered voters. Maricopa Community College District consists of seven campuses with over 30,000 full time equivalent students serving the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area of approximately 1.5 million people.

Step 3: Weighting of Strategic Groups

In the third step of the assessment procedure, the model requires that the data from the strategic constituencies be weighted according to the relative political influence exercised by each group. The Maricopa administrators were asked this question and ranked registered voters in greatest importance, state board members next and legislators last with weights of 7.2, 5.8 and 4.7 respectively on a scale of one to ten.

Step 4: Analysis

Two levels of analyses were possible. Under the first, the data for each strategic group and the administrators are presented on page 3 of the handouts. As shown in the examples, for a particular item group opinions are expressed in terms of how many disagreed, were not

sure or agreed on whether that activity was important to do or should be funded with tax dollars. Numbers which are underlined indicate a majority by a constituency for that column. This display is valuable since it permits the leadership of a college to determine the absence or presence of support and plan accordingly.

The second level of the analyses focused on a strategy to determine those community college activities where the greatest difference in priorities exist between the Maricopa administrators and the strategic groups. This procedure involved analysis of variance and rank order differences. Activity items containing both significant differences and substantial rank differences were defined as most important and thus worthy of attention. Examples of these analyses are found on page 4 of the handouts. In each instance, the status of an activity item is summarized and represented in terms of "importance" and "fund with taxes" as seen by the strategic groups in contrast to administrators.

Major Findings

1. For the Maricopa district 27 of 60 activities surveyed were found to contain differences of most importance between administrators and the strategic groups. It is in these areas where changes need to occur if the District is to become more effective from the resource dependence perspective.

2. A majority (18) of the differences of opinion resulted from resistence by the strategic groups to the use of tax monies for activities supported by administrators.

3. Controversy involving the use of public funds cannot always be attributed to strategic group preferences for avoiding taxes. The following are examples of activities where strategic group priority for the use of tax dollars was greater than administrators.

   7 scholarships and financial assistance to students of high academic ability

   27 basic skills instruction for academic, occupational, life-survival or GED purposes

4. There was a lack of support for the importance and the use of tax dollars for activities suggesting special treatment for a sub-group of the general population. The following examples suggest that the resistance goes beyond biases toward racial or ethnic minorities:

   5 special support groups, counseling and tutoring services for ethnic and racial minority groups

   11 courses and programs to Indians on Indian reservations

   26 scholarships and other financial assistance to minorities, disadvantaged and other students

42 special tutoring and counseling for non-native English speakers

46 special support services and groups for women returning to the work force.

5. Strategic groups were also hesitant to support a series of activities related to "open access," "salvage" and extension functions commonly associated with the philosophic commitment of the community college. This attitude may reflect growing concern about the unnecessary duplication of services at public expense, particularly if the services are already available on a campus or represent skills that a student should have learned while in high school. Activities indicative of this controversy include:

36 credit courses and programs at such easy to reach locations as shopping centers, libraries and other public facilities (extension)

44 special tutoring and counseling to students with limited reading and writing ability (open access, salvage)

55 instruction in study skills and academic survival skills to students unfamiliar with college work (open access, salvage)

57 credit courses and programs to employees of public agencies and business at the work site (extension)

Conclusion

In summary, the pursuit of excellance is just that - a pursuit of an elusive ideal at which only successive approximations are made. While engaged in this pursuit, two observations must be kept in mind. The first is that the resource dependence model deals with perceptions. Experience has shown that these change, hopefully as a result of planned efforts by community college administrators. Consequently, periodic measures of effectiveness should be made. Second, the information supplied by this study will achieve maximum utility when interpreted by administrators in the field and at the operational level. For each activity yielding differences of most importance administrators must decide on one of two options to improve institutional effectiveness and excellence in the minds of the public: (a) modify an activity in response to constituency demands or (b) attempt to modify strategic group preferences in congruence with the current (adminstrative) priorities. In short, the Maricopa District by engaging in this study has attempted not only to assess its effectiveness but in so doing has defined a new margin of excellence.

Reference Cited

Pfeffer, J. and Salancik, G.R., *The External Control of Organizations: Resource Dependence Perspective.* New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

HANDOUT MATERIALS

Excellence and Organizational Effectiveness in an Urban Community College District

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Topics for Presentation

1. Organizational Effectiveness
2. Relevancy
3. Assessment
4. Major Findings

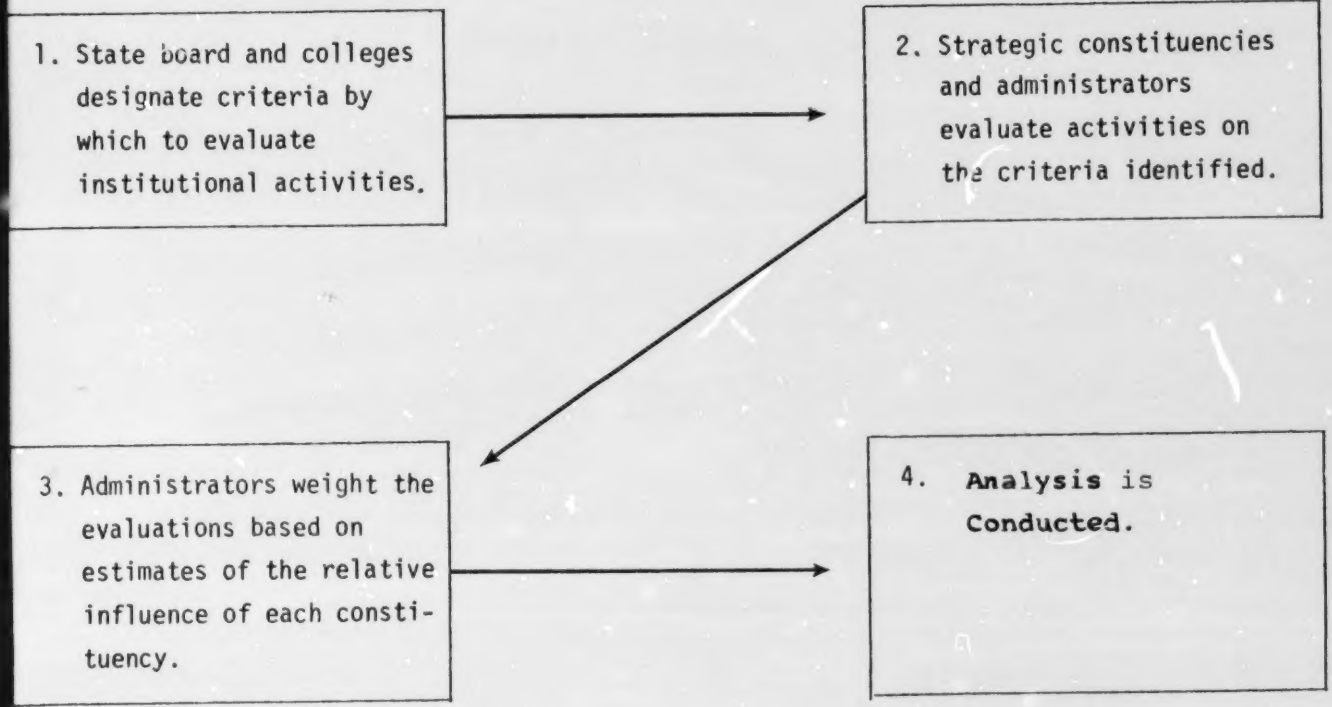
Definition of Terms

Organizational Effectiveness: the assessment of an organization's activities by its strategic constituencies.

Organizational or Institutional Activities: the 60 validated activity statements which comprised the items of the survey instrument.

Strategic Constituencies: those individuals and groups (a) on whom the organization is critically dependent for resources and (b) who exist outside of the organization. For this study the strategic constituencies were defined as legislators, state board members and registered voters since these individuals and groups interact to determine resource availability.

Assessment: is determined by the evaluation procedures as adapted from Pfeffer & Salancik (1978, p. 87).


1. State board and colleges designate criteria by which to evaluate institutional activities.
2. Strategic constituencies and administrators evaluate activities on the criteria identified.
3. Administrators weight the evaluations based on estimates of the relative influence of each constituency.
4. Analysis is Conducted.

Sequence of Procedures Adapted from Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, p. 87) Used to Assess Organizational Effectiveness.

EXAMPLES OF FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS AS PERCENTS OF RESPONSES TO ITEMS OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACTIVITIES SURVEY ON 'IMPORTANT TO DO'

	MARICOPA ADM			STATE BOARD			LEGISLATORS			MARICOPA VOTERS		
	DIS-AGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	DIS-AGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	DIS-AGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	DIS-AGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE
ITEM NO. 38	0	0	100	25	6	69	15	7	78	13	11	77
ITEM NO. 28	35	15	50	44	19	38	42	12	46	36	15	49
ITEM NO. 22	40	23	37	19	6	75	33	21	45	18	11	71

EXAMPLES OF FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS AS PERCENTS OF RESPONSES TO ITEMS OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACTIVITIES SURVEY ON 'FUND WITH TAX DOLLARS'

ITEM NO. 38	3	6	91	57	0	43	51	10	39	51	16	33
ITEM NO. 28	38	15	47	47	20	33	46	18	36	52	20	28
ITEM NO. 22	39	27	33	19	25	56	39	20	42	24	15	61

All Activities at Maricopa with Differences of Most Importance in Terms of Strategic Group Support Presented by Mission Category.

Mission	Activity	Nature of Disagreement: Strategic Group Support (a) does not exist, "0" (b) exists but, "<, =, >" administrators	
		Importance	Fund with Taxes
1. Associate degree programs	13. Credit courses and programs in commercial arts, broadcast and interior design.	=	<
	20. Credit courses and programs in the arts and sciences for students older than traditional college age.	=	<
	21. Credit courses and programs in business, technologies and other occupational areas for students older than traditional college age.	=	<
	38. Credit courses and programs in the arts and sciences for personal development.	=	0
2. Entry-Level Vocational Training	35. Credit courses and programs in entry-level technologies and health services.	=	<
	48. Credit courses and programs in hospitality services.	<	0
3. Special Services and Programs for High Ability Students	2. Special academic courses, programs and support services to students of high academic ability.	<	=
	7. Scholarships and financial assistance to students of high academic ability.	=	>
4. Basic Skills Instruction	27. Basic skills instruction for academic, occupational, life-survival or G.E.D. purposes.	>	>
5. Program Related Student Activities	54. Credit courses in the performing fine arts, physical education and home economics.	>	0
	59. Sponsorship of student government, publications and other activities.	>	0
6. Credit Courses for High School Students	28. Credit courses and programs in occupational areas offered to high school students as part of their educational program.	=	0
7. Special Services for Handicapped Students	22. Instruction in basic skills to mentally handicapped students.	>	>
	49. Hands-on skills training to mentally handicapped students.	>	>

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Reference Cited

Pfeffer, J. and Salancik, G. R., The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

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